



Parasha Bereshit

October 14, 2023

Torah: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5 - 43:10

Ketuvim Shlichim: 2Peter 3:3-14

Talmidim Shel Yeshua 11

Shabbat Shalom mishpacha. Today, we restart our *Torah* cycle with the very first *parasha*, *Bereshit*, Genesis, in English. The Hebrew word *Bereshit* is composed of the letter *beit*, a preposition meaning “in” and “*reshit*” meaning beginning. In the beginning, ADONAI created heaven and earth, the Hebrew actually says *Elohim*, G-d, who created and He said, “Let us make man in our image.” “Our image,” plural. While we translate *Elohim* as G-d, it is actually a plural word. No time to go into it today, but this means for us who follow Yeshua, that this is *Elohim*, G-d, who is *echad*, “one,” a united, compound one, consisting of Yeshua, the Creator (John 1), ADONAI, His Father and the Holy Spirit, the *Ruach HaKodesh*. In the beginning, after ADONAI finished His creation of heaven and earth on the seventh day, He rested, the very first indication that the seventh day of the week is a special day. (Genesis 2:1-3). Then, when ADONAI gave Israel the Ten Words at Mount Sinai, He said: 10 ... “*but the seventh day is a Shabbat to Adonai your God.*” (Exodus 20:10a TLV) and also 11 “*For in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Thus Adonai blessed Yom Shabbat, and made it holy.*” (Exodus 20:11 TLV). It’s very clear to us who follow Yeshua with Messianic understanding, that the seventh day is the *Shabbat* and we honor it, resting on this day as ADONAI commanded. Right now would be a great time to do a word study on the Hebrew word *Shabbat* and its implication of “rest.” But we can’t, because we are continuing our series, *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*, Disciples of Yeshua. In it today, we will seek to understand “why we honor the seventh day Sabbath” or follow any other of ADONAI’s commands.

To do that, we turn to *Sha’ul*. We study his writings to answer the question why we as Messianic Jews and Gentiles honor *Torah*. *Sha’ul* has the answer. As Yeshua’s “apostle to the Gentiles” with almost ¼ of the writings of the *sh’lichim* written by him, *Sha’ul’s* writings seem to be the most controversial of the disciple’s writings. How is he to be interpreted? Some even believe that Paul began a completely new and different religion. Traditional Christianity doesn’t believe that, but they do interpret his writings with an antinomian mindset. In their interpretation, Paul, the Apostle is definitely against keeping “the Law.” But, if *Sha’ul* the Jewish *Shaliach* (sent one; apostle), is interpreted with an understanding of Scripture that is not antinomian, then *Sha’ul’s* writings support the keeping of *Torah* (obeying the Law). You who have followed my teaching, know that my view of *Sha’ul’s* writings is that he is not antinomian and that the whole of Scripture is not antinomian. *Sha’ul*, as we will see, is definitely nomian, in favor of keeping *Nomos*, Law. This is not a criticism of those who look at Paul as being antinomian. We all see through a glass darkly. (1Corinthians 13:9 & 12). We may not all agree on the way to understand Scripture, but as followers of Yeshua, Jesus, all of us are seeking the truth and all are called to do it in love.

Yeshua in His conversation with the Samaritan woman said: *23 But an hour is coming—it is here now—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people as His worshipers. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” (John 4:23-24 TLV). People have interpreted the words spirit and truth in different ways. My belief is that regarding spirit, Yeshua is referring to the Holy Spirit as motivating the human spirit, in other words, having trusted in Yeshua and having received the *Ruach HaKodesh*. People who have not trusted in Yeshua can worship ADONAI and many do, but Yeshua said that the Father is seeking those to worship Him who will worship Him in or by His Spirit. *Sha’ul* confirms this in Philippians 3:3 that we worship by the Holy Spirit which indwells us. To worship ADONAI in truth means that our truth must be based on Scripture and what it reveals. But how do we get to the real truth about Scripture? We get there by understanding *Sha’ul* and his Jewish mindset. It is Yeshua’s truth explained by His only follower who had a personal visit with Him after His death and resurrection. Ananias said: *14 “... , ‘The God of our fathers handpicked you to know His will—to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.’*” (Acts 22:14b TLV). That’s what we’re seeking to understand, the utterances of Yeshua’s mouth to *Sha’ul*. What did he believe and teach about Yeshua’s will?

To introduce *Sha’ul*, we begin with his encounter with the people of Philippi (Acts 16:9-40) during his second journey. On his first *Shabbat* in Philippi, he met a woman named Lydia, witnessed to her and she and her family were all immersed. She invited *Sha’ul* (and *Sila*, Silas) to stay at her house. A congregation later formed in that city, but it was sometime after *Sha’ul* left. He did not know the people, never having visited the actual congregation. Writing to them years later, he offered this resume about himself: *5 .. “circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel; from the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the Torah, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting Messiah’s community; as for Torah righteousness, found blameless.”* (Philippians 3:5-6 TLV). These things are what he described as being “his resume’ of things in the flesh,” after he had first given his spiritual resume’, his testimony of faith in Yeshua: *3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship by the Ruach Elohim and glory in Messiah Yeshua and have not depended on the flesh—* (Philippians 3:3 TLV). I referenced this verse, verse 3, a moment ago in regard to worshipping in spirit. If *Sha’ul* had known Marty Goetz’s song “A Jew Born Anew,” it would have been his testimony and he could have sung “Yes, through and through, I’m a Jew born anew.” Both of his resumes, that in the flesh and that by the spirit, are important. He had faith in Yeshua and worshipped in the Spirit, but also used his physical attributes to worship and serve ADONAI.

By saying that he was circumcised on the eighth day, he identified himself as a descendant of Abraham. When he had his *b’rit milah*, his circumcision which brought him into the Covenant of Abraham, he was given the Hebrew name *Sha’ul*, but he also received a name in the vernacular of his place of birth. He was born in a Roman city in the Roman Empire and his secular name was the Latin, *Paulus*, which he shortened to Paul. He also identified himself as being of Israel, that’s what it actually says in the Greek, *Isra’el*, those who are the descendants of Isaac’s son Jacob. And, he narrowed his identity down even further by writing that he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe which remained in the alliance with the Tribe of Judah when the kingdom split after Solomon’s son became king. Then he said that he was “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” No one is certain what *Sha’ul* meant by this. My thought is that he was expressing his zealousness as a Jew to serve ADONAI. With regard to the *Torah*, he was a Pharisee. In other words, he viewed the *Torah* as the Pharisees did; was zealous for it. A point that is often missed here is that “he didn’t believe that *Torah*

righteousness could save you,” and that was also the view of the non-Messianic Pharisees of that era. Non-Messianic Pharisees, the group from which *Sha’ul* came, believed that their atonement was provided by their being a part of the Nation of Israel, ADONAI’s chosen nation. They also believed that Gentiles who converted to Judaism, those who became Jewish proselytes, were saved in the same way and would be a part of the resurrection. The Pharisees emphasized *Torah* and the traditions, but not necessarily that keeping them atoned for you. Other beliefs of the Pharisees were the resurrection of the dead and in angels, something which the Sadducees, the priestly sect, did not believe. *Sha’ul* believed in angels and the resurrection of the dead and his zeal for the *Torah* was shown by his fervor in persecuting the Messianic community.

Finally, with regard to *Torah* righteousness, he said that he was blameless. I don’t believe that he meant that he did not sin. He is the one who taught us that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of G-d.” (Romans 3:23). Blameless seems to mean that his intention was to follow *Torah* and that he was blameless because he had trusted in Yeshua and regularly repented of his sins. The same can be said about us, Yeshua’s followers of today, if we regularly repent and ask forgiveness for our sins. If we do that, we are blameless with regard to *Torah* righteousness, just as *Sha’ul* was. But, in order to be blameless with regard to *Torah* righteousness, a person must first be a follower of Yeshua and believe that you should obey *Torah*.

To sum this up, we see that *Sha’ul*’s spiritual resume’ in verse 3 was that he was a follower of Yeshua who worshipped in the Spirit. His physical resume’ identified him as an Israelite who upheld *Torah*. His conclusion was this: 9 ... *and be found in Him not having my righteousness derived from Torah, but one that is through trusting in Messiah—the righteousness from God based on trust.* (Philippians 3:9 TLV). He made it clear that he was obedient to *Torah*, but that there is no righteousness in keeping it, and that righteousness only comes through trusting in Yeshua.

He told the Philippians that he was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, but speaking to the men of Jerusalem, he said: 39 *“I am a Jewish man from Tarsus in Cilicia,..”* (Acts 21:39b TLV). Why did he tell them something different? He did it because he had been accused of bringing Gentiles into the Temple, something he didn’t do, but because they thought he did, the crowd wanted to kill him. He said this because he wanted the crowd to know that he was one of them. The Greek word the TLV has translated “Jewish” in Acts 21 is *Ioudaios* (ee-oo-dah'-yos) meaning “Jewish, a Jew or Judea.” Even though *Sha’ul* was from the Tribe of Benjamin, he was also a Jew, the term used to refer to those who had been a part of the southern kingdom of Judah. The Hebrew equivalent is *Yehudi*, which as we know means “praiser of *Yah*,” a short form of YHVH (יהוה). In this sense, all Israelites of that era were *Yehudis*, Jews, and it remains that way today. *Sha’ul* was a Jew, but a Jew from the Tribe of Benjamin.

But, can *Sha’ul* be made into a Christian in order to support Christian views? I don’t believe so. When *Sha’ul* said “I am a Jew,” he was declaring who he was theologically. That’s what his encounter with the crowd in Jerusalem was all about. The rumor had started that he had brought Gentiles into the Temple because he had been seen earlier in the city, Jerusalem, with a Gentile. His statement “I am a Jew” was to counter this and also the earlier accusation made that “he was teaching the Jews living in Gentile lands not to follow *Torah*, not to circumcise their children, or not to follow the customs. Speaking of the Jews of Judea, the elders told *Sha’ul*: 21 *They have been told about you—that you teach all the*

Jewish people among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs. (Acts 21:21 TLV). To forsake Moses meant to not obey *Torah*. The customs were in addition to *Torah*, but obviously something approved by *Ya'acov* and the elders who made the statement. Verse 21 upholds the belief of both the elders and *Sha'ul* that *Torah* is still important after trusting in Yeshua by faith. It was because of this accusation that *Sha'ul* paid for the sacrifices for three men and himself to undergo a *nazirite* vow in the Temple, something they were in the process of doing when he was taken into custody. His taking of the Nazirite vow would confirm to the Jews of Jerusalem that he had not forsaken *Torah* or any of the customs, including those surrounding the completion of the vow. He said to the crowd, "I am a Jew." In saying that, he was essentially telling them that "I have not done these things. I follow *Torah*. I encourage the *b'rit milah* for Jewish children and I observe the customs of the Jewish people." Understanding that *Sha'ul* actually said and wrote these things, how can people believe that Paul taught against *Torah*? *Sha'ul* was not a Christian in today's sense because of these very clear statements which also mean that he worshipped on *Shabbat*, the seventh day. Some do not know the truth because they haven't studied and some disregard clear Scriptural truth in order to uphold their belief, their own theology.

The only truth which we can verify as actual truth is that which is found in Scripture, Genesis to Revelation. Its truth can be twisted, but there is an actual, correct understanding of everything in the Bible and that is our goal. We don't have all truth, no one does, but to have it is our goal. Truth cannot be verified as truth from any other source whether it be the *Talmud*, the Apocrypha, the Book of Enoch, any apocryphal gospel or any tradition of men. There may be some truth in these writings, but not Biblical truth. The only truth that we can uphold as Messianic followers of Yeshua is that which comes from Genesis through Revelation.

We agree with the statement, *sola scriptura*, a Christian theological position deriving from the Protestant Reformation. The words are Latin meaning, "by Scripture alone" and they refer to the derivation of Christian doctrine and practice. *Sola* means "alone." There are five doctrinal *solas* which came out of the Protestant Reformation. They are: (1) that Christians are saved by grace alone, (2) through faith alone, (3) in Christ alone, (4) as revealed by Scripture alone, and (5) to the glory of God alone. As Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we agree completely with the theology of all five. These words are from *Beit Shalom's* Statement of Belief: "Faith or trust in Yeshua as Messiah brings righteousness with G-d based solely on grace through faith." I emphasize "solely on grace." In this statement, our belief is in agreement with *solas* 1, 2 and 3: "saved by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone. Regarding sola 4, "as revealed by Scripture alone," our Statement of Belief says: "The Holy Scriptures as originally written are divinely inspired and without error. Consisting of the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible, which consists of the *Torah*, the Prophets, and the Writings) and the *Ketuvim Notzrim* (the Writings of the Followers of The Branch), the Scriptures are our final authority in all matters of faith and practice." Not only do we state that, but we believe it and do our best to follow it and do not follow as truth anything other than that which can be verified in the Bible.

We do observe a number of Jewish traditions in our services and in our personal spiritual walk, but only traditions which have their basis in the Scripture are observed as binding. For example, we recite the *Shema* as a statement of faith each *Shabbat*, a long held Jewish tradition. But the *Shema* itself is quoting Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:9-18. Yeshua referenced the *Shema* when He spoke about the greatest commandment

and the second that is like it in Matthew 22, Luke 10 and Mark 12. We can learn some things from the *Talmud* and we can learn some things from the ancient Jewish writings, but they are not our authority. Only the holy Scriptures are. The truth is that today many within Yeshua's body say "*sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone," but do not practice it.

When Paul is viewed as a Christian, many times his words are twisted to support an *antinomian* view of the Scriptures. *Antinomian* is from the Greek words *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law. The usual Christian definition is: "one who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation." But, *Sha'ul* was not a Christian. He was a Messianic Jew who followed *Torah* and he was definitely not antinomian. He never worshipped on Sunday or ate non-kosher food. We are seeking truth. The truth is that the Bible itself is not antinomian. Yes, Paul does believe that faith alone is necessary for salvation, but he does not believe that the "Moral Law, "the *Torah*," is of no use. And neither do we at *Beit Shalom*. Our Statement of Belief continues: "Faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to G-d's *Torah* commandments are not mutually exclusive. Both are expected as our reasonable faith and practice as new creations in Messiah. As such, we observe and celebrate the Biblical *Shabbat* (Sabbath, the seventh day of the week), Holy Days, and Feasts of ADONAI, which He gave to Israel with their fulfillment in and through Messiah Yeshua. Biblical Judaism, the faith of the first-century followers of Yeshua, is our goal." Yes, we believe that salvation is by faith through grace alone, but we also believe that after salvation, faithfulness to ADONAI's *Torah* is required. I believe that *Sha'ul* also believed this and will prove it now by examining some of his statements from the Book of Romans.

He begins in chapter 1 with this: *16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 In it the righteousness of God is revealed, from trust to trust. As it is written, "But the righteous shall live by emunah."* (Romans 1:16-17 TLV). Where the TLV reads *emunah*, the Greek says *pistis*. *Emunah* is its equivalent from the Hebrew as found in the Septuagint. *Emunah* means faith or trust. *Sha'ul*'s statements here agree with *solas* 1, 2 and 3, "saved by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone." Although these verses in Romans don't mention Yeshua by name, the preceding 15 verses of Romans 1 are all about Him and it is clear that *Sha'ul* means that "the righteous will live by faith in Yeshua."

He continues: *12 For all who have sinned outside of Torah will also perish outside of Torah, and all who have sinned according to Torah will be judged by Torah.* (Romans 2:12 TLV). The congregation at Rome was not established by *Sha'ul*. It was already existing when he wrote his letter to them and its origin is unknown. One view is that the congregation was founded by believers who returned to Rome after the *Shavuot*, the Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Some of *Sha'ul*'s statements in his letter to the Romans seem to indicate that the congregation was made up of a combination of believing Jews, believing Gentiles and also Jewish and Gentile seekers of Messiah. He may have gotten this information from Priscilla and Aquila, believing Jews who were forced to leave Rome during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. What this verse means for followers of Yeshua is that if you know *Torah*, you will be judged by *Torah*. But, how can *Torah* judge us if our salvation is by faith alone?

Let's look further. *13 For it is not the hearers of Torah who are righteous before God; rather, it is the doers of Torah who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, do by nature the things of the Torah, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the Torah.* (Romans 2:13-14 TLV). How can the "doers of *Torah* be justified,"

declared righteous, when *Sha'ul* said in chapter 1, “But the righteous shall live by *emunah*” faith. The answer is that they are “justified” because they have already trusted in Yeshua by faith, but are also called to be “doers of *Torah*” after salvation. We cannot ignore the context. Everything thus far is about those saved by faith – believers! ! This was also true for the Gentiles that *Sha'ul* was referring to. When he said those who don't have *Torah*, he meant those Gentiles who had trusted Yeshua and were worshipping in a Messianic congregation (Congregation at Rome) and following *Torah*, but had not converted to Judaism. They had *Torah* because of being in that congregation. “Had no *Torah*” meant that they were not Jews. Within the traditional Judaism of the day, these Gentiles would have been referred to as “proselytes at the gate,” “G-d fearers.” *Sha'ul* didn't call them that, he called them Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua who were obedient to *Torah*.

Our question is: how can doers of *Torah*, those who do their best to do what *Torah* says, be justified? The next two verses clarify this: *15 They show that the work of the Torah is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts switching between accusing or defending them 16 on the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:15-16 TLV). Jews and Gentiles show that the work of the *Torah* is written in their hearts by obeying *Torah*. Believers saved by grace alone as in *solas* 1, 2 and 3, show their faith by the work of *Torah* written in their hearts, that is, obeying, being doers, of the *Torah*. Regarding the New Covenant, ADONAI said: *32 “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people.”* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). It is my firm belief that when we truly trust in Yeshua, Jew or Gentile, and enter into the New Covenant, that His *Torah*, His teaching and instruction found in Genesis through Revelation, is written on our hearts. Many who have trusted Yeshua may not know that it is there, but His commands are somewhere within our spirits waiting for us to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them! Written on our hearts is the desire to be obedient to *Torah*, but many times it is oppressed by our own spirit. Verse 16 in Romans 3 which we just read, tells us that this judgment regarding the *Torah* written on our hearts (verse 15) is of believers. In Romans 3:15, *Sha'ul* references Jeremiah 31:32. Again, we must focus on the context. In this verse regarding our future judgment day, *Sha'ul* is talking about believers. *16 ...on the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:16 TLV). The subject is the same to the congregation at Corinth: *10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad.* (2Corinthians 5:10 TLV). He also spoke of this in Romans 14:10-12. *Sha'ul* was talking about believers. As followers of Yeshua, we will all one day stand before him to account for what we have done, both good and bad and will be judged by our keeping of the *Torah* as *Sha'ul* said in Romans 3:15-16. This aligns with our Statement of Belief which says: “Faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to G-d's *Torah* commandments are not mutually exclusive. Both are expected as our reasonable faith and practice as new creations in Messiah.” This means that we are saved by faith through G-d's grace, but as *talmidim*, disciples of Yeshua, we are expected to follow in His footsteps, walking faithfully, as He did, to the best of our ability. This is a long and complicated subject and we can't complete it in just one or two days and will continue at our next time together.

In my last message, I incorrectly stated that Rico Cortes had converted to Conservative Judaism along with twenty others. I was incorrect. I did not do the research I should have. That was a Richard Cortes. I have apologized to Rico and he has graciously accepted my apology. The statement has also been corrected in the written message on our website.

Our message today presented some of the Scriptural evidence regarding why we obey the *Torah*, including keeping the seventh day *Shabbat*. In our next message, we will study *Sha'ul's* writings about the "righteous decrees of the *Torah*," seeking to understand what those decrees are for us today. It has always been important for the followers of Yeshua to study the Scriptures for themselves, but very much so today in these last of the last days. Where the horrible events of the last week in Israel will lead in ADONAI's scheme of things is unknown. We don't know how much further things will have to escalate until Yeshua intervenes. Joel Chernoff's lyrics that we sang this morning seem to fit our time and very accurately describe what we as Yeshua's followers must do! "Rise up- all you sons of Jacob! Rise up- all you cities of Judah! Rise up- for the Lord your God is fighting for you! Stand up- for the God of Israel! Stand up- for the Son of David! Stand up- for the King of Kings is standing with you!" *Sha'ul* wrote: *22 For we know that the whole creation groans together and suffers birth pains until now— 23 and not only creation, but even ourselves. We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Ruach, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for adoption—the redemption of our body.* (Romans 8:22-23 TLV). Never has that been more true and that time nearer than it is today. We are called to be Yeshua's faithful witnesses to His truth, the truth which He has called us to proclaim. Our message today was not for the Church. The leaders of the Church must proclaim their own understanding of G-d's Word. This message is for the Messianic body of Messiah Yeshua and those He is calling to be a part of it who can receive it. But, regardless of where we stand in our understanding of Scripture or our theology, in Yeshua's greater body above all, we must put on love (Colossians 3:14) and love each other as Yeshua loves us! (John 13:34). *Shabbat shalom!*